

Message Text

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TO AMEMBASSY KINSHASA

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: CG, PINS, SHUM, SOPN

SUBJECT: ZAIRIAN EXECUTIONS IN THE US MEDIA

1. FOLLOWING IS CONTINGENCY PRESS GUIDANCE PREPARED ON
ZAIRIAN EXECUTIONS:

QUOTE: QUESTION-- THERE ARE WIRE SERVICE REPORTS THAT
THE GOVERNMENT OF ZAIRE TODAY EXECUTED 13 OF 14 PERSONS
A MILITARY TRIBUNAL SENTENCED TO DEATH ON MARCH 16 FOR
PLOTING THE OVERTHROW OF PRESIDENT MOBUTU. WHAT IS
THE DEPARTMENT'S REACTION TO THIS DEVELOPMENT?

ANSWER -- FIRST OF ALL, WE HAVE SEEN SUCH PRESS REPORTS
BUT WE HAVE NO INDEPENDENT CONFIRMATION OF THEM.

QUESTION -- DID THE DEFENDANTS RECEIVE A FAIR TRIAL IN
THE DEPARTMENT'S VIEW?
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ANSWER -- THIS IS ESSENTIALLY AN INTERNAL ZAIRIAN
AFFAIR, BUT INSOFAR AS WE ARE AWARE, THE TRIAL WAS
CARRIED OUT IN ACCORDANCE WITH ZAIRE'S CONSTITUTION AND
LAWS. WE UNDERSTAND, FOR EXAMPLE, THAT MUCH OF IT WAS
CARRIED ON TELEVISION AND RADIO, AND IT WAS OPEN TO THE
PRESS.

QUESTION -- DID THE US MAKE ANY REPRESENTATIONS TO THE ZAIRIANS PRIOR TO THE EXECUTIONS, EITHER ON HUMAN RIGHTS OR OTHER GROUNDS?

ANSWER -- YES. WE CONVEYED TO ZAIRIAN AUTHORITIES OUR HOPE THAT HUMANITARIAN CONSIDERATIONS WOULD BE INCLUDED IN THEIR DELIBERATIONS BEFORE ANY FINAL DECISION WAS TAKEN ON CARRYING OUT THE SENTENCES.

QUESTION -- COULD YOU BE MORE SPECIFIC AND TELL US AT WHAT LEVEL AND WHERE SUCH A DEMARCHE WAS MADE, WHETHER IT WAS COORDINATED WITH OTHER GOVERNMENTS, AND WHAT THE ZAIRIAN REACTION WAS?

ANSWER-- NO, IT SIMPLY WOULD NOT BE APPROPRIATE FOR ME TO COMMENT ON THE MODALITIES OF THIS EXCHANGE IN DIPLOMATIC CHANNELS. UNQUOTE.

2. SUBJECT WAS NOT RAISED AT FRIDAY, MARCH 17, DEPARTMENT PRESS BRIEFING.

3. NEW YORK TIMES CARRIED FOLLOWING ACCOUNT OF EXECUTIONS ON PAGE 5, SECTION ONE, OF ITS MARCH 18 EDITION:

QUOTE: 13 ARE EXECUTED IN ZAIRE IN ANTI-MOBUTU PLOT -- LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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KINSHASA, ZAIRE, MARCH 17 (AP) - EIGHT ARMY OFFICERS AND FIVE CIVILIANS DIED BEFORE A FIRING SQUAD AT DAWN TODAY FOR THEIR PARTS IN WHAT PRESIDENT MOBUTU SESE SEKO SAID WAS A PLOT AIDED BY FOREIGN DIPLOMATS TO SABOTAGE ZAIRE'S ECONOMY AND FORCE HIM FROM OFFICE.

THE PRESIDENT ANNOUNCED THE EXECUTIONS IN A SPECIAL BROADCAST. HE DID NOT NAME THE FOREIGN COUNTRIES ALLEGEDLY INVOLVED.

NINETY-ONE PERSONS TRIED BY A MILITARY COURT IN PROCEEDINGS THAT BEGAN MARCH 8 AND ENDED THURSDAY. NINETEEN WERE SENTENCED TO DEATH, FIVE IN ABSENTIA.

A SGT. MAJ. KISONGA, WHO WITH HER SISTER BRIGITTE RAN A BAR WHERE THE PLOTTERS ALLEGEDLY MET, WAS THE ONLY ONE OF THE CONDEMNED GIVEN A REPRIEVE BY THE PRESIDENT.

"IT IS THE FIRST TIME IN THE HISTORY OF OUR COUNTRY THAT A ZAIRIAN MOTHER IS SO SERIOUSLY INVOLVED IN A PLOT," PRESIDENT MOBUTU SAID, EXPLAINING HIS DECISION TO GRANT MERCY TO SGT. MAJ. KISONGA, THE ONLY WOMAN IN THE TERROR-

IST GROUP WHOSE DEATH PENALTY WAS COMMUTED TO PRISON FOR
LIFE".

THE OTHER CONVICTED CONSPIRATORS RECEIVED SENTENCES RANG-
ING FROM ONE TO TWENTY YEARS. FOURTEEN WERE ACQUITTED.
UNQUOTE.

4. ON PAGE A-16 OF ITS MARCH 18 ISSUE, WASHINGTON POST
HAD FOLLOWING ARTICLE WITH ARCHIVE PHOTOGRAPH OF MOBUTU:
QUOTE:

KINSHASA, ZAIRE -- A GOVERNMENT FIRING SQUAD EXECUTED
EIGHT ARMY OFFICERS AND FIVE CIVILIANS YESTERDAY FOR
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WHAT PRESIDENT MOBUTU SESE SEKO SAID WAS A PLOT TO OVER-
THROW HIS GOVERNMENT AND SABOTAGE ZAIRE'S ECONOMY.

MOBUTU ANNOUNCED THE EXECUTIONS IN A SPECIAL, 10-MINUTE
"MESSAGE TO THE NATION" BROADCAST OVER RADIO AND
TELEVISION.

THOSE EXECUTED WERE AMONG 19 PERSONS SENTENCED TO DEATH
BY A MILITARY TRIBUNAL THURSDAY. FIVE LIVE IN BELGIUM
AND WERE SENTENCED IN ABSENTIA AND ONE WOMAN WAS REPRIEVED
AND GIVEN A LIFE SENTENCE.

OF 91 ACCUSED PLOTTERS, 14 WERE ACQUITTED AND THE OTHERS
WERE GIVEN JAIL TERMS OF BETWEEN ONE AND 20 YEARS IN
THE NINE-DAY TRIAL.

MOBUTU ALLEGED THAT THE PLOT WAS AIDED BY THREE FOREIGN
DIPLOMATS IN KINSHASA, BUT DID NOT NAME THE COUNTRIES.
THE ALLEGED PLOT WAS DISCOVERED FOLLOWING RIOTS IN THE
CENTRAL BANDUNDU PROVINCE. UNQUOTE. VANCE

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